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SUBJECT: DRC 2009 BFIF PROPOSALS

REF: A) STATE 128559
B) JAFFEE-WINSTEAD 01-09-2009 TELCON

11. (U) Post proposes two projects for funding under the Business Facilitation Incentive Fund (BFIF) for 2009: An East and Central Africa Economic Officers Conference to be hosted by Embassy Kinshasa, and a series of U.S.-DRC commercial seminars in key selected cities in the DRC.

12. Project 1: East and Central Africa Economic Officers Conference

A - Justification. Post proposes hosting an East and Central Africa Economic Officers Conference in Kinshasa. The conference will bring together Economic Officers from throughout East and Central Africa with regionally-based USG officials from agencies such as USAID, FAA, Commerce, USDA, USTDA, and MCC. Conference objectives will be to enhance cooperation among Economic Officers in the sub-region; develop more effective communication and coordination with USG agencies not present at most AF/C and AF/E posts; exchange views on key economic issues, including regional economic integration; and promote the professional development of State Department Entry Level Officers.

B- Planning Milestones. The timing, budget and agenda will be developed in consultation with EEB/CBA. Post looks forward to discussing these issues with EEB/CBA and other embassies and agencies during the mid-February AF Commercial Training Program in Johannesburg.

C- Estimate Costs. To be developed in consultation with EEB/CBA.

13. Project 2: U.S.-DRC Commercial Outreach Road-Show

A- Justification. Despite significant potential commercial opportunities for U.S. companies due to the DRC's vast natural resources, large population (65 million) and generally open trade regime, enhanced U.S.-DRC commercial relations remain hampered by the country's challenging investment climate. The World Bank has rated the DRC as the most difficult country in the world to do business in its annual Doing Business ranking. At the same time, local private sector associations and the government of the DRC (GDRC) have expressed a strong desire to work more closely with the USG to improve and enhance U.S.-DRC commercial relations and take greater advantage of USG programs such as AGOA. This commercial outreach activity will include the organization of seminars in three principal commercial cities in the DRC: Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, and Kisangani.

Each seminar will include presentations on doing business with the United States, including information on key USG programs and policies, to support increased U.S.-DRC trade and investment. The seminars will serve to enhance U.S.-DRC commercial relations by providing practical information to potential commercial partners, as well as provide an opportunity to engage with Congolese interlocutors in major commercial centers on overcoming key hurdles to doing business in the DRC. Post proposes organizing the seminars

in coordination with the Congolese Chamber of Commerce (FEC or Federation des Entreprises, in French), the leading national advocate for the promotion and protection of private enterprise in the DRC.

B- Planning Milestones. Post proposes holding one seminar in each of the second, third and fourth quarters of 2009. The Kinshasa seminar will serve as the kick-off of the outreach series. Performance indicators will be based on the number of participants benefiting from enhanced knowledge of doing business with the United States, with the longer-term dual goals of enhancing U.S.-DRC commercial relations and removing obstacles for U.S. trade and investment.

C- Estimated Costs. Total estimated costs for all three seminars is: \$7415.00. (Note: FEC has agreed to provide use of their conference room facilities in all three cities free of charge. Travel-related costs to Lubumbashi and Kisangani reflect post-imposed restrictions on the use of DRC owned/operated airlines, which limits domestic flight options and require longer stays in each city. End Note)

Kinshasa:

Miscellaneous expenses: \$250

Lubumbashi:

Airfare for Econ Officer and FSN: \$2000.00

Lodging/Per Diem for Econ Officer and FSN: \$2300.00

Miscellaneous Expenses: \$250.00

Local Transportation: \$400.00

TOTAL: \$4950.00

Kisangani:

Airfare for Econ Officer and FSN: \$1080.00

Lodging/Per Diem for Econ Officer and FSN: \$835.00

Miscellaneous Expenses: \$200.00

Local: Transportation: \$100.00

TOTAL: \$2215.00

14. Point of Contact at post for both proposals is Economic Counselor Elizabeth Jaffee, email: jaffeeeee@state.gov.

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